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Special Issue for Mourning Poet Zhang Jianhong (1958-2010)

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ICPC Statement on the Passing of Mr. Zhang Jianhong

(1st January 2011)

Independent Chinese PEN Centre (ICPC) mournfully announces that its beloved member Mr. ZHANG Jianhong passed away at a hospital in Ningbo City, Zhejiang Province in east China, yesterday on New Year Eve. Mr. Zhang, also a Honorary Member of Melbourne PEN and PEN America centers, was a freelance writer better known by his penname Li Hong and a former prisoner of conscience who had been released on medical parole on 5 June 2010 after having served 3 years and 9 months imprisonment of his original 6-year sentence on the offence of “inciting subversion of state power” for his writings. He had been treated under intensive care in the hospital for a severe disease of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis since his release last June.



Mr. Zhang Jianhong, a prominent poet, playwright, editor and author in Ningbo, was born on 6 March 1958 in Yin County, Zhejiang Province. He started publishing his poems and essays when he was an university student in 1980. In 1985, he joined the Writers Association of Zhejiang Province and became an editor of *Wenxue Gang* (Literature Harbour) magazine. In 1988, he was appointed the deputy secretary-general of the Writers Association of Ningbo City and the director of its committee for poems, essays and reportages. In 1989, he was imprisoned for the 3-year Re-education through Labour by the Public Security Bureau of Ningbo City on a charge of “counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement” for his support of the student-led pro-democratic movements throughout China. As a result, he was expelled from the Writers Association and dismissed from all of his posts. In 1991 he was released with a reduction of one year and half of his sentence. Since then he had become a freelance. His is a prolific author and has published numerous books, including poems, plays, novels and essays. His several TV series have been broadcast on CCTV and also published in DVD.

Mr. Zhang Jianhong was the editor-in-chief of *Zhejiang Shaonian Zhuojia Bao* (Zhejiang Children Writers News) for a few months before he resigned to found a humanity and literature website *Aiqinghai Net* (Aegean Sea) as its editor-in-chief in August 2005. The website became very popular among the intellectuals soon but was closed by Zhejiang News and Communication authorities 7 months later on 9th of March 2006. Since then he had written and published his articles at various overseas Chinese websites, including Boxun,

Minzhu Luntan, Dajiyuan, Yi Bao, Guancha, Minzhu Zhongguo, etc until he was arrested in September 2006. On 19 March 2007, Mr. Zhang was sentenced to 6 Years imprisonment and 1 year deprivation of political rights for “inciting subversion of State power”, based only on his online writing and publishing of dissent articles (62 pieces).

In the same month as his appeal was rejected on 15 May 2007, Mr. Zhang Jianhong had been diagnosed to have suffered a rare neurological disorder due to his health declining with muscle atrophy caused by nerve damage during his early detention in early 2007. Since October 2007, he had been held in Zhejiang Provincial Prison General Hospital, Hangzhou, the capital city of Zhejiang Province. Although being paralyzed and unable to manage his daily life without a personal aid, his applications for medical parole under doctors’ advice had been continuously turned down for no proper reason until his disease was diagnosed as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis so that he could not breath without a ventilator under intensive care in a hospital. PEN International, of which ICPC is a branch, and other international human rights organizations have been extremely concerned about the case of Mr. Zhang Jianhong, called several times on the Chinese authorities and the international communities for his release and raised grants for his treatments. Although he has been released on medical parole half a year ago, it had been already too later to save his life.

ICPC considers Mr. Zhang Jianhong as a most recent victim of contemporary literary inquisition in China and one of its worst cases over 30 years since China his started its policy of “reform and opening-up” in late 1970s, and believes that the relevant authorities in China hold responsibilities for Zhang’s disease development, delayed medical parole for proper treatment, and finally his premature death. Therefore, ICPC angrily condemns and strongly protests against the Chinese authorities and calls for the investigation on this case. ICPC also calls on the Chinese authorities to take this case as a lesson to deal with all of applications of medical parole submitted by the prisoners, especially ICPC members Shi Tao and Yang Tianshui, and its honorary members Zheng Yichun, Xu Wei, Hu Jia, Huang Qi and Tan Zuoren, and others who have been suffering the severe diseases.

Mr. Zhang Jianhong was a long-standing activist practicing freedom to write in China where there has been lack of the freedoms of speech and of the press. He made outstanding contributions to the creation of contemporary Chinese literature, to the defending of freedom of speech and the promotion of civil society in China. His passing is our irrecoverable loss, but his large number of works devoted to the spirit of freedom to write will become a valuable outcome of Chinese literature and heritage. Defending freedom of expression and promoting free development of Chinese literature are ICPC’s aims. Therefore, to uphold the spirit of PEN is our best way to commemorate Mr. Zhang Jianhong.

ICPC expresses its deepest condolences to the passing of Mr. Zhang Jianhong, and to the mourning of his wife Ms. Dong Min and his family.

Will Mr. Zhang Jianhong rest in peace!

PEN International is the oldest human rights organization and international literary organization. The Independent Chinese PEN Center is among its 145 member centers and aims to protect Chinese writers' freedom of expression and freedom to write worldwide and advocates for the rights of Chinese writers and journalists who are imprisoned, threatened, persecuted or harassed.

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Zhang Jianhong's Poems

The Dagger

A dagger under Shanhai Pass has wept many years
In its sheath
In the Song of Great Wind
In the remains of the faithful Chief General of Jizheng



The tourists are packed like the weaving yarns,
And the hawkers are shouting like the drums
When the dagger is drawn out of its sheath
One thing intangible
Has already straggled out
Toward the ancient wall, mottled and damp, becoming a vision
Where is General Qi Jiguang? Where is General Wu Sangui?
In the place where the Great Wall has been broken
The Express 18 is so fast as the dagger flashes

The dagger is not real. We live in the nuclear age
When stores sell only toy guns and plastic swords
The dagger was Chen Sheng, or Spartacus
A cartoon, a Jin Yong's novel
A fairy tale in the industrial society
Dagger has always been an emblem:
The oriental philosophy of nothingness
As at this moment, we have mounted the First Pass in the world
In the depths of our feelings and souls there is the vast expanse of whiteness
Thinking about the vast lonely universe
With thousands of headless bodies up and down, being pointed
On the broken necks, the dagger marks are still there
The land is bleeding, but the people have felt no pain
Where the time has fructified into the grapes and fine poems

Under Shanhai Pass I got a dagger by chance
Passing the station, I took down a timetable to wrap it in a hurry
Just feeling in my blood that Yan Mountans were up and down
A kind of iron roaring continuously

Dagger, Dagger, I will forever listen to your weeps!

One Year in Hangzhou City

Spring night feels like water. At Beishan Road 32
The carved gate is closed, on which knocker
Yu Dafu's finger prints have remained
Tonight, I do not come for him but
Sitting on a bench by the lake
And having lit a cigarette, I am waiting for a friend to come

In my view, there is an expanse of limpid water of Inner West Lake
Lying flat in such a way
As a bronze mirror polished for a thousand years
The glory of the sleepless city has been left on the water surface
A few threads of colourful stains in illusion
I know what is happening in the city
Or what will happen
The silent West Lake also knows

Not far away is the Bai Causeway, a long long line
Distinguishing the natures between Inner and Outer West Lakes
Extravagance and simplicity, noise and silence
Such is excellent. To the right is the Lonely Hill
To the left is the Lingering Snow on Broken Bridge
One year of stay in Hangzhou, I did not so
Carefully size up the Lake of Heaven
In the spring twenty-two years ago
We rented a boat to play with water. When a wind came
We almost failed to return to shore
My dear, do you still remember?

Oh, there is still the moon, round
And pale, hanging over the Broken Bridge
What year is tonight? What day is tonight?
Why have I never thought about it? But all have already been completed
My Year of Fate in Hangzhou
What does it mean? Perhaps only in the water

An answer could be found

Even farther away there is a touch of mountains
Faint and spacious. That is Wu Hill
Chenghuang Temple looks like a flaming cloud
Reflecting a dream left from the past Southern Song Dynasty

2006.3.16

Farewell Wu Hill

Wu Hill by the West Lake
Wu Hill in the bell tolling from the Drum Tower
Wu Hill crowded by the Boxers and bird-players of Shiwukui Lane at daybreak. In the evening
The square is boiling and Chenghuang Temple is burning
Wu Hill where the citizens are swaggering with their pets
Wu Hill where the migrant workers with dull eyes are sitting on the steps
Is this the legendary Wu Hill?

Poet Su Shi's and painter Mi Fu's Wu Hill
Marshal Yue Fei's and Primer Qin Hui's Wu Hill
Wu Hill with Hefang Street and Hu Qingyu Pharmacy
Wu Hill where Emperor Gaozong of Song Dynasty was reciting poetry and painting with his concubines
Wu Hill where the luxury and befuddled lives
Led to a conquered nation still singing the Courtyard Flowers
Wu Hill where the people enjoyed tea houses and played Mahjong
For eight hundred years as a moment
Wu Hill where the fading dream of Southern Song Dynasty has been copied
In the most menial level eight hundred years later!

From the bitter summer to early spring
I have sojourned at the foot of Wu Hill
Wu Hill that I could not avoid seeing anytime
Wu Hill where there is a Grand Canal rolling through
From the provincial government compound to Zhongshan Park
With the wind and rain in between

Wu Hill where a storm built on top of a lotus leaf
From the journal Young Writers to the website Aegean Sea
Has shocked the world
Wu Hill where I can see the mountain whenever opening a window, and you are still standing
in silence
While it is difficult to be impressed by water after cross the great sea

Three hundred nights has passed instantly. Under starlight
Those sleeping while resting their heads on the mountain shadow
Are the happy people. The heaven wind of Wu Hill
Always gets into a dream, and kulapati Dongpo
Elegantly comes to the meeting. Having Wu Hill as a companion
And Having dialogue with an ancient
Never tired to see each other, occur only on Wu Hill!

When the spring has come to Wu Hill, I have to leave you away
The wildflowers on the hillside
Have thrived in full bloom
The white is a vast expanse of them
And so is the blue
Minmin is picking them, and Shuoren is photographing
Their joys have made the sunny spring even brighter
Standing at Fengbo Pavilion I light a cigarette
It is the highest point of Wu Hill
Where old West Lake and parvenu Hangzhou
Wholly come to my view
At this moment, perhaps only Wu Hill knows that
Due to a poet's temporary stay
It has regained its dignity that was lost for a thousand years
Farewell, my Wu Hill!

Written in Hangzhou, 2006.3.26.

The Homeward Journey

Inadvertently selected day is an inevitable day
While egrets were passing over the mountains, the careful Minmin
Took up the baggage, and shut the doors and windows

After a gentle sigh
The car like a toy flew fast over
The Qiantang River Bridge with steel cables

Inadvertently chosen road is an inevitable road
At a crossroad in front, the driver asked where to drive
I said to turn right. Suddenly, a valley
Filled with the miasma was rushing toward our faces!
The sign was pointing: Xiaoshan Changhe
We inadvertently slipped into an old
Mountain town, where the villagers walked slowly
And their faces were indistinct. During the path winding along mountain ridges
We had to admit: we had lost our way

Inadvertently stated discourse is an inevitable discourse
Not long ago, I said
"Who wants to be a missing person"
Would my homeward journey turn it into a prophecy?
Seeing and saying were just between breaths
Awaking in the fall relays upon
The poet's instinct and intuition
In fact, the inadvertently stated words
Would often be carved on the back of tortoise shell

Inadvertently experience has no significance to history
The landscape on my homeward journey was odd and unpredictable
I, as well as my wife, friend and luggage, was so joyful as a child in a magical world
With a brave heart, looking for
The magic ring in legend
Wind was blowing, mountains and fears were retreating
And hometown was ahead- "Unintentional road
Is the news of an inevitable shark
From the scenery ending of a singular story
Buried continuously by the fruit stones on whole way"
- The homeward journey is just, in a long
Magic game, a short rest between the acts

Back to Ningbo on 4th April 2006, and written on 11th

Home

From Nan Hill not far away, a river silently flows down
In front of my home, below my window.

Standing on the balcony, I am watching the piece by piece of willow shadows getting dense
And also the petal by petal of peaches falling on the water.

The stony riverside is covered with ficus pumila vines,
A shoal of little fries has found a safe haven.

Walking along the verdant riverside, Min is exclaiming -
Three to five geckos are sticking to the washed wall!

Going there in this way, you will see a stone bridge,
A guard under the camphor is sleepy, and a puppy gambolling

Beyond the bridge there is a library, and an outdoor fitness field
Receiving a moment of serene under the sunset glow

When returning it is still the same riverside, where the geckos
Is nowhere in sight while twilight has dyed the river scarlet

While mounting the stairs, my heart keeps missing that group of little fries,
The innocent little fish, how will you spend this night?

Oh, do not think so much. When the sun is setting west
All have been turned to silence but the river was still flowing quietly.

At home Jiangdong residence in Ningbo, 2006.5.3.

Great Compassion Mantra for Freedom

Slavery and exploitation are by no means fate!
My homeland, my people
For two thousand years, for a hundred years, and for fifty-seven years
Have come to the end of patience

Vegetation and people are lamenting
The billion compatriots are frightening
On an inch of land there is an inch of tears
For an inch of freedom there is an inch of blood

Those strangling freedom cannot be pardoned
Those resisting to freedom cannot be saved
Those mucking freedom cannot be forgiven
Those disregarding freedom cannot be redeemed

A century's dream is based on nothing
Than a heart of great compassion
Who can deprive the natural rights
Who can destroy Buddha's insight

In past I recited mantra, the truth
Said by the past billions gods as innumerable as the sands in Ganges
Dharani means a general door to enlightenment
To cross over all miseries without worrying

In present I issue mantra to pray for my compatriots
Sincerely through reciting Prajna Paramita countless times
To cut off all sins, to get rid of great miseries
To board a Wisdom Boat and soon mount the Nirvana Hill

Bid farewell to the terror of tyranny
Turn back the upside-down universe
Let freedom flowers bloom and the world unite
It is now the last moment

I am willing to die for freedom, never reconciled to slavery!
There is compassion mantra in universe and the truth in the world
My homeland in disgrace, my people in shame
Siddhyantu mantra padāya svāhā... ..

2006.4.30.

Translator's note: this poem was listed among 8 pieces of author's writings as the criminal evidences against him in court verdict that sentenced him to six years imprisonment on "inciting subversion of the State power"

(Translated by Yu ZHANG)

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***LI Hong**, pseudonym of ZHANG Jianhong, poet, playwright, freelance writer and a member of Independent Chinese PEN, had been put imprisonment since 6 September 2006 on "inciting subversion of the state power". He was given permission for medical parole, however he passed away soon after that on 31st December 2010 due to incurable disease derived from imprisonment.*

As Gentle As Strong

--Laments for My Friend Li Hong

By Ah Hai



On the last day of 2010, Poet Li Hong withdrew from his life stage with anger after massive sufferings. He was like a guest who left a fabulous banquet with wholehearted anger. Li Hong had been through three hard times within his entire bumpy life. His incurable disease also contributed to his death out of fatal. Although there are voices of commemoration after his death, few of these people understand his life experience. As a result, not any of these voices has ever specifically mentioned his life and stories in detail.

Li Hong and I have been friends for almost 30 years. After acknowledging his death, I kept recalling his voices and smiles in his youth. To me, it feels like entering a deep cave, where I shall once again meet this friend, whose personality was like a gentle but strong jade.

Teaching Chinese in Hengxi Middle School

I first met Li Hong around year 1981, when I was just enrolled into Peking University, and he was just allocated to Hengxi Middle School in an outer suburb of Ningbo, working as a Chinese language teacher. There was a small community in Ningbo gathered by poets, artists and democratic activists. Li Hong and I both composed poetry, which made us familiar naturally. During school holidays, I went back to Ningbo for friends' reunion in this community.

By then, he used his born name Jianhong Zhang instead of Li Hong. Back to that time, Jianhong was an imposing man with 1.78 meters height, fair skin and delicate face. He was a good speaker, with a little bit stutter though. He often got attacks from friends in this community, saying his name was girlish, while his personality was a bit sissy. When he gave himself pen name, he purposely chose the name Li Zhang representing male strength, and changed to Li Hong later on.

A modern artist Feng Chen in Ningbo was one of the leaders in this community. Feng was just in his twenties, but kept long hair and beards, indicating his mature mind and provinciality inherited from his Sichuan ancestors. On the contrary, Li Hong was gentle and elegant, even a little bit shy, making his personality as beautiful as jade.

As a matter of fact, Li Hong had been through his first hard time in life. He was born with a knowledgeable background, parents being officials in County Yin. County Yin was in the countryside, but its Council was located in Jiangdong District of Ningbo, where Li Hong was brought up not with luxury, but with pride and love. After the reintroduction of University Entrance Exam, he got an offer from Chinese Language Department of Ningbo Normal College at the age of 19, enjoying his success when young.

There was a trend for university students to establish poem-sharing groups and publish poem magazines in the early 80s. Dozens of literary magazines were set up all over the country, including *Young Heart* by Jingya Xu, Xiaoni Wang and Xiaobo Liu. During his study in Ningbo Normal Collage, Li Hong followed these pioneers setting up the magazine *Horizon* with his peers. However, Ningbo had always been a conservative place on the East China Seashore. *Horizon* was claimed as one of the underground democratic magazines being censored thoroughly by the police. Upon his graduation, Li Hong was allocated to the mountain area Hengxi far away from Ningbo as a punishment, teaching in a middle school. This was the first hard time in Li Hong's lifetime.

Getting Used to the System

Although being punished to work in the mountain area, Li Hong was still able to joke around, being gentle and optimistic. He sought inspiration from the streams, mountains and golden flowers, ended up with lots of meaningful short poems. In summer or winter holidays, we usually gathered to drink and chat. We discussed poetry and art even for the whole nights.

Around 1983, Li Hong informed us with excitement that his family introduced him a fiancée called Min Dong, who was an elegant lady from a good family. Min's parents were also officials in County Yin. The two families are fairly well matched. Min was educated with strict disciplines. In her girlhood, her parents threatened her that if she wen to street alone, her legs would be chopped. We could imagine Min was indeed a lady living in a boudoir. Li Hong could not help his pride when speaking about Min.

At the very stage, Li Hong asked me to bring something to his uncle in Beijing, so I went to visit his uncle as needed. As remembered, his uncle lived around Taoranting. He was a typical old style scholar, who once published proses and novels. He also opened a bookstore in Shanghai with five gold bars. However, he was tortured to death by the Communist Party without exception. I reckon that Li Hong's breaking up with the Party was also related to his family background.

In Chinese culture circulation system, Ningbo is like an appendix with few connections. In Ningbo dialect, it is described as a “no through alley”. Li Hong worked in the outer suburb of Ningbo, barely connecting with the predominant culture, so it was hard for him to enter the modern poets’ community. However, he was diligent in writing and kept contributing articles, which were continuously published on local official magazines, such as *East Ocean, Ningbo Literature and Art*.

Li Hong’s talent made his poems outstanding among others in eastern Zhejiang Province. In the middle of the 1980s, he had good news one after another, like a meteoric rise. First of all, he had a lovely daughter born to him soon after getting married with Min. He once wrote such stanzas like “nappies with different colors hanging/as if flags of different countries flapping”, brimmed with joy as a new father. More over, his writing career was getting better because he wrote quite a few positive praising modern poems that are published on all sorts of magazines one after another. In 1987, he was invited for the “Youth Poetry Society” held by *Poetry*. Although the members of the Society in 1987 cannot be compared with the first group of members in the Society, Li Hong’s attendance established his position within the local community.

Since then, Li Hong was appointed as poetry editor in *Literature Harbor*, which was an official magazine of Ningbo Literature and Arts Federation, getting rid of his title as a rural middle school teacher. I still remember that he edited a set of my poems in this magazine. His wife Min was allocated to an art salon of Ningbo Literary Federation. He was respected as an official writer with contribution and pride. If without Tiananmen Square protests, he would have become a dignified professional writer within the system, even become the chairman of Ningbo Literature and Arts Federation, as the chairwoman at present was one of his students at that time.

Being Tortured in Detention

The 1989’s gunshot in Tiananmen Square shocked the whole China, with its wave through all the way to Ningbo. I wasn’t able to get detailed information as I was already out of the country. After the accident, I heard that Li Hong, together with another friend in the community kept broadcasting news from VOA about Tiananmen Square protests in *Jiangxia Park* in Ningbo central, in order to arouse people’s awareness. After that, Li Hong fought against the Party’s tyranny by his conscience and courage. It reflects a poet’s boldness, which is as soft but tough as jade.

Li Hong was soon arrested in his office, and was put to detention with forced labor for three

years in a hurry. By then, three to four protestors were arrested and punished, including my friend Jie Jiang. Not as the rest of the country, these protestors were not treated as political offender during detention, but were put together with antisocialists, rapists and robbers, forced with extremely hard labor work.

All of a sudden, Li Hong was no longer a respected and well-known professional, but a criminal in detention, accompanied with rapists and thieves. The unevenness was overwhelming. I was later acknowledged that Li Hong had been through tortures like hell during detention. This sensitive, proud and elegant gentleman was repeatedly maltreated and humiliated by the bureau of prison.

I once sent some money to another poet Naisheng, asking him to buy two cartons of cigarettes to Li Hong. However, when I met Li Hong in 1992, he told me he did not receive the cigarettes. By then, he was just out of detention and was dismissed from his job. He planned to do some business.

That delicate, gentle and proud Li Hong had become a sorehead with anger. A scar from previous torture was left between his eyebrows. The divorce with Min made him a sloppy single man. His poems were abandoned from all official magazines. With his life almost gone to a dead end, Li Hong was busy opening a steels trading company.

I remember he was trying to tell me his story during detention, but choked with sobs before he started.

In those years, when western leaders coming to China, they normally took a list of political offenders required to be set free. However, the political offenders in Ningbo were never included in this kind of lists, even were barely known by outside. What Li Hong suffered during detention was far more severe than what Xiaobo Liu or Dan Wang had been through in Qincheng. Li Hong could only keep his sufferings to himself because few people knew about it.

Living like a Homeless Dog

After 1992, I contacted Li Hong less than before, although we did meet several times getting to know his life experience.

Similar to what Yiwu Liao said, after Tiananmen Square massacre, poets were living like homeless dogs. This happened on Li Hong as well. His trading company ended up with failure,

so he headed to Beijing from Ningbo, a place full of sadness. In Beijing, he earned his life by writing drama scripts for some friends.

After drifting in Beijing for several years, Li Hong did not have any fundamental progress. He and Min Dong resumed their marriage, and went back to Ningbo continuing his writings. Around 2003, when I saw Li Hong, he had just finished the novel *the Story of Tailor Hongbang*, which was later published as *the Story of Hongbang*. It was converted to a TV drama series. They were looking for investors. His life at that time could be regarded as stable, but the humiliation of three years' detention was obviously rooted in his heart. He used to mention some other democratic activists who were our friends in Hangzhou. However, I kept silent, as I did not know the background. This was the last time for me to meet Li Hong.

During my work in Independent Chinese PEN Center since 2006, I came to notice that Li Hong took part in establishing the ideology website *the Aegean Sea*, working as the chief editor. *The Aegean Sea* was like a falling star with a shining flash. It was soon closed down because of large amount of articles fighting against the Party's mind shackles. This totally turned Li Hong into a warrior without fear.

The Last Striking of Destiny

Since the closing down of *Aegean Sea*, Li Hong totally changed to an irritated tiger. This gentle and even a bit shy poet finally used her pen as weapon, without any backer or support from overseas, not even a used helmet. However, he attacked the Party all by himself, just as what Don Quijote did. In just a few months, he wrote down more than 100 articles fighting the Party.

An irritated person has no taboo in his words, so did Li Hong. He harshly criticized the Party, pointing to the most sensitive part. He described the Party as "a fascist autocracy that overwhelmingly abused human rights, an executioner that is addicted to blood but never regret, a regime that already committed yet are committing antihuman and antisocial crimes far more worse and scary than nazideutschland". He also published articles in the Party's most hated media *the Epoch Times*.

In 2006, I once helped Li Hong for applying writing allowance from the Centre, and nominated him for Free-to-Write Award. Unfortunately it wasn't successful. During that time, I reconnected with Li Hong via MSN messenger. Before his arrest, I could sense his dangerous situation from his articles, so persuaded him to get away, at least away from Ningbo. I remember he told me peacefully about his and Min's readiness for the worst, which

means he courageously faced the final arrest and sacrificed with everything known beforehand.

Several days later, Li Hong was arrested. The MSN symbol representing him was never lightened.

After being arrested, Li Hong finally aroused attention and identification from international human rights world. However, this meant nothing to him any more. The last strike to him was especially sharp. He was put in jail for six years with incurable nerve disease. His ending was even more miserable than Don Quijote: fighting towards the Party all by himself, but was crashed to death without exception.

I bear not to describe Li Hong's miserable condition before he passed away. What I am capable to say is that Li Hong had the most miserable death among all the democratic activists. I also do not intend to put Li Hong together with Situ Hua and Xiaobo Liu who have been mentioned a lot recently. Still, Li Hong was a poet who made fearless sacrifice for Chinese democracy, totally based on his own conscience.

Li Hong's name will be forever with the cause of Chinese democracy!

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Ah Hai, pseudonym of GUI Minhai, historian, poet, writer and a member of Independent Chinese PEN, had made academic studies in China and Sweden. He is now residing in Germany.

Echo from the Aegean Sea

--Lament for Poet Li Hong

By Yi Ping

Finally you were set free
As a cell of freedom
Melting into the clear sea

Endless sound of waves goes down to generations
--Colliding of bones
Those broken pillars
Humbly holding the glory

Your broad forehead and disdainful smile
In distance --
Fiddle sounds are much bluer than ocean
Yes, need to look afar
Standing upright to remind the land

Never is a home country
So cruel
Those old sayings
Never were so muddy
Today--
Even children bear no purity

One drop of blood melts into the ocean
--Calls of the martyr
To have reflections on the sky
There are always lives to strike with no fear
To be fresh
Like wind standing above rocks

Between the new and the old
Before the bell rings
Death turns into beauty all of a sudden
Like a new born baby



The Aegean Sea is breathing under the sky
with the sunlight
gods open wills

There should be an ending
There should be a welcome

Though on debris I am standing
Hearing ricks and land shaking
Disasters will never stop
Darkness and blood will attack more fiercely
--such a dangerous home country

Nevertheless let the blue
Seawater wash
As a ceremony at death bed
From broken ancient cities
To the silent mud above hills
New leaves are growing again in fresh mornings

You look forward and back
So far and so severe
Flowers were cast to wife and daughter in coldness
Slowly echoes
Patrol on the fringe of land

The Aegean Sea, your destination
your only home country
--The other's already dead
Ancient legends, clanging rocks
A beam of soul
--Light of Phoebus
shining and singing in waves

Oh, words from the waves
The only place you belong to
The garden poets have been singing for generations

10th Jan 2011 in Ithaca

(Translated by Angela HU)

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***YI Ping**, poet and member of ICPC, was born in Beijing in 1952. In 1969, he was sent to work in Heilongjiang, and went back to Beijing in 1975. He graduated from Chinese Department, Beijing Normal University in 1979. He left China in 1991 to teach in a university in Poland. Yi Ping is now residing in the USA.*

Don't Forget to Inform Li Hong Upon Family Mourning

By LU Wen



In my impression, the situation for ICPC Mainland China members is worsening. Yu Jie was threatened before: “Don’t you believe? We can make you evaporate.” Recently the police told Teng Biao: “Beat you to death and dig a hole to bury!” The number of ICPC members being monitored, house-arrested, imprisoned and released from jail indicates that ICPC members are the targets to the government to make a long-term cracking-down. Afraid of the power of international media, the police, though not uttering out publicly, treats ICPC and its members as evil organization and devils.

According to an incomplete calculation, the “jail-released” ones in ICPC include Qi Jiazhen, Sun Baoqiang, Liu Di, Jiang Qisheng, Liao Yiwu, Yan Zhengxue, Fu Guoyong, Ji Yancheng, Liu Shui, Du Daobin, Li Yuanlong and Zhu Yufu while there are some still locked in prison including Shi Tao, Yang Tianshui and Liu Xiaobo. This calculation does not include short stays in police stations and detention centres of those like Wang Lixiong, Zan Aizong, Liu Yiming and me. No matter how long these literary friends have been locked up there and how much hardship they have suffered, at least they have left the concentration camps and still live in this world. But Li Hong left this world in such a hurry. I don’t know why he pulled out the oxygen pipe from his throat. Because of being unable to endure the tortures of the fatal illness and the police? Or because of being unable to suffer the evilness of the human minds? Or because of despairs to the future. In my eyes, this is actually like Euthanasia because of desperate poverty. Of course, this kind of rational action is not for entering the Heaven earlier, but for escaping controls from the police eternally.

“Humans are most ruthless, who can force women to pregnant/also can shoot through the hearts of sons with shrapnel /leaving the cries of mothers longer than time.” Is this stanza of poem one the reasons why the poet determined to die? He once said in an article: “for whatever reason, I will remain to the last moment.” Though knowing “among the people without sense of painfulness/poets are the least useful”, however “if I have the courage like Chen Tianhua’s and Mishima Yukio, I will definitely throw myself into the sea or cut my belly to die”. This eventually comes true to him.

Sources said that Li Hong got in his cell an incurable strange disease known as "nerve dysfunction, which led to serious arms muscle atrophy and loss of function, with risks of

spreading to legs and systemic paralysis. His family members had repeatedly applied for medical parole, but Zhejiang justice authorities did not approve it until June 5, 2010 when Li Hong was paralyzed, unable to speak or breathe, and sustain life by breathing machine and fluids. "

Once I saw a picture of Li Hong in hospital bed. He was misshaped beyond recognition, with white pipes plugging in his nostrils and mouth. His eyes were closed. Maybe sleeping. Maybe fainting away. Totally different from the other picture he took in woods when he was in his prime youth.

With continuous calls from the Death, his delicate and hopeless life made its last breaths, like a sunset descending to the west, like a candle burning to last in the night winds, also like corpses in the square and homeless dead souls. The spell of "Inciting subversion of state power", wicked frame-ups and all sorts of suitable crimes were paid off with years of imprisonment, bone-cutting illness and the end of life. This total paying off is like a poor person with deadly high-interest loans. Only debt collectors like Wang Shiren and Mu Renzhi would run in snowy night in excitement to force Yang Bailao to drink up the death liquid.

"Farewell to the terror of tyranny, turn back the up-side-down world, the flowers of freedom in blossom, and the world become a whole one". Could this dream come true only after death? Is it true as Liao Yiwu said "there is not a single light in the middle of Utopia"? The satisfied police finally offered a late "medical parole", leaving Li Hong's wife to pay the huge amount of medical expenses. Every single coin sucked and drained up every single drop of blood.

While in waiting for the death and in endless pains, the poet was breathing with difficulties and struggling. He could not see the sun, nor the moon, but the ceiling above the sick bed only. His soul was lingering between Red Dress Lane and the Augean Sea, running in Su Jia Tun. He also heard "the shouting of the robbed organs". He said: "while names were lost, the organs without their owners were swirling, dancing and crying with blood in my dreams, and made me scared and unable to sleep. So many human corneas, hearts, livers and kidneys. Where are they? " He also said: "After their internal organs were all robbed away and exchanged with money, their bodies have been processed, burned into ashes, and disappeared into air. If there are souls existing in the world, they will definitely search the whole world for the stolen-and-sold corneas, hearts, livers and kidneys. " He continued: "Those stolen and sold organs will talk, struggle, escape and fight, and will tear the mask of the seemingly peaceful, righteous, prosperous and happy world into pieces!"

He was also expecting to see his pen friends and fellows. But where were the pen friends and

fellows? He might not know that there could be several friends like Zhu Yufu and Zhao Dagong, who could break through the blockade of the police and come to the outside of the ward. Chen Shuqin told the media: “On the night of December 31st, friends in Hangzhou happened to have a gathering. Security officers came to me and told me not to go out during the New Year period. If I refused, they would send guards to stay at the gate of our building. If I had to do some shopping, they would follow. I asked them what happened. They refused to disclose at the beginning. I asked them which place I could not go. They mentioned Ningbo. I asked whether something happened to Li Hong. They did not deny, and just told me that it would be enough as long as I knew it.” Besides, Chen Shuqin, some supporters were also monitored and warned, including Zhu Yufu and Wen Kejian in Zhejiang Province. I am even doubting that during those days after Li Hong’s death, the strange disconnection of internet at my house had something to do with it.

In addition to blocking friends to visit and condolence, Li Hong’s funeral was also interfered by the authorities. According to information from Human Rights Defenders website, after Li Hong died, “the hospital was full of state security guards and policemen. His family members contacted funeral parlor for mourning ceremony, but they were informed of unavailability of ceremony hall. Therefore they could not have any mourning activities.” Sources said that Li Hong’s body was cremated the next day after his death, as quiet as a piece of coal being thrown into a furnace. Li Hong’s wife, Dong Min, fell in, and his family members had to suffer in silence. Upon hearing this, it seemed that I heard Li Hong was shouting in the cremating furnace: Alas! I am “controlled” again by burning flames. All I could see and all I could hear are that “Director Xie Chengfu from Ningbo Public Security Bureau, staring with two wolf-like eyes, said with relief: Zhang Jianhong, we caught you at last after nine years!”

“One inch of tears for one inch of mountains and rivers, one inch of blood for one inch of freedom; willing to die for freedom, refusing to be slaves!” Fighting with burning blood and shouting with broader ideals get in return passing of life, separation of family members, with wife losing husband and kids losing father. Does it have to pay such a high cost to “make a human voice among groups of wolves”?

As for Li Hong’s viability, he could just give up his dreams to lead a happy and smooth life instead, to be an excellent walking corpse, making lectures and speeches here and there about learning Thought of Three Represents. However, he did not like to be another Guo Moruo, “to mix up in the cultural jungle like the grease ball scholar Yu Qiuyu”, or “to walk on the fashion T stage like the glittering painter Chen Yifei”. Neither did he like to be indulged in empty talks for self-protections, nor did he want to stay away the worldliness as a selfish achiever. It would be nothing serious if he just wrote something scrapping the rules. But he always strode

into the mine fields, make a loud voice for the tortured Falungong members, for Chen Guangcheng and Gao Zhisheng. He knew quite well that he “felt each piece of writing could be the last one, and every meeting with friends could be the last”. Friends and relatives persuaded him that “ it gets dangerous and better stop writing for a while”. However, he still thought that “there is no difference between the social prison at large and the small iron cage of the security apparatus”.

As philosophers put it, the flowers of democracy need irrigations of blood from both martyrs and dictators. Li Hong is another testimony for that. He did not seek for success, just like the stone-pushing Sisyphus. He would like to be a pioneer and step-stone like Ms Qiu Jin and Lin Zhao to push for social progress and improvement.

Getting to know all is empty upon death
But feel sad not to hear the songs of democracy
When common people enjoy days of freedom
Don't forget to inform Li Hong upon family mourning

(Translated By Biao CHEN)

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***LU Wen**, writer, essayist, novelist and a member of Independent Chinese PEN Centre, is now living and writing in Suzhou, China.*

Ten-Day Elegy

--Mourning Poet Li Hong

By Jingwa

1.

Only my one-person procession standing on snow
December 31st , church bells stopped striking

It is winter
Cold, hard to get up for one more glimpse of sceneries

Fourteen bronze statues standing on the dome in line with the snowing sky
Smoke comes and swarms of birds stand in dark night as well

Crowds just now rushing in streets suddenly disappear
Bad news are all brought to other people

Crows on power poles are deadly quiet
The Indian's long braids are scattered on windows

Gloomy people's faces are always silent
So many people are just like forgetting time and themselves

2.

January 1st , heavy snow
Indian smoking chimneys finally emit water beads

Someone is running
Among those coming into the church, only one sad person

One bird on a dead branch wants a wild cry but cannot utter a sound
Staring the statues on the roof, with mouth shut

The cross turns into faded brass
Paint-stripped silver goes across chest, pin fallen down

Sound fallen into the thick snow



One person falling down is just a flash

Followed with cryings of the dumbs, the miserable New Year poet is dead

Even the Baroque skylights are grey

Not seeing sunshine for two days

At least not seeing sunshine for ten years in prison

The only icy-cold iron door makes it winter all year round

A group of crow-black prisoners are running

The team disappears all of a sudden

3.

January 2nd, heavier snow

Every household close their doors tight refusing all news

Indian's long braids hang down like monsters

A political prisoner came out jail and lie dead for three days

Snow flakes in blossom

Outside windows are such sceneries

Christians go to church with worried faces

Big bells eventually did not strike

Birds outside door sitting on branches faraway, gazing at the tree leaves with no Spring at all

Are wailing with griefs towards the statues more faraway

One-person mourning procession farewelled one person in snow

This is the time of nowhere

Steps are slow

Hands for writing poems cannot move

4.

January 3rd, deep snow buries the poet's body faraway, and no one would find

This is winter, too cold for people to take one more look

Dead branches covered in white
Bird stopped at one spot with no motion

It didn't want to fly further away
The poet's time is already finished

5.

January 4th, many people heard about this poet, out of jail and died
What is his name again

Holding black umbrella, people are walking in the street for refuge
People are crowded with shoulder to shoulder

No snow today, sunny, but no sunshine
I discuss with myself the difference between hell and heaven

Keep away from me, motherland
Farewell, hell filled with sins

Standing before my house, I am looking at myself
Thirteen bronze statues are keeping in a grey line with persimmon trees

On the wall, closest to the window, a crawly bug
Is motionless, one new year paper-cutting turns pale

I stretch my hand thinking to squeeze it to death like the end for a political prisoner
But wake up all neighbours coming over and barking wild

All human shadows are small
Bodies in shadow play are swaying at the tile-white noon

It falls down from the window sill
Died, as a bird stops flying when a poet dies

6.

January 5th, I am searching an adjective for post-communism
Snow flying wild, all flights are forced to stop

Poets cannot see lights will come up again
But you belong to your own single soul

You don't have your own country or city
Here exists no prophet or beautiful-feathered robin at all

Go back home when it gets dark
One statue goes back to the winds to rest

7.

January 6th, I keep myself indoors, snow as heavy as you
I know the church outside my window is deserted

Oh those people, they all found their own long braids
Indians' windows are closed

You know who you will meet walking alone in snow
You are a poet, what would you dream of when you are sleepless

My heart died
However, my heart has been dead for many days

If another bug climbs across my wall
I will hold back my hand, not to kill it

Not like a political prisoner running wild at dark night
Kids next door used to send over laughters

And black birds on branches are going to sing today
Your hands are already motionless

Your wholly-paralysed prison
My garden grows white flowers only

You asked when the sun would shine upon you

8.

January 7th, no heavy snow, but wild wind

It is winter, I hide indoors looking at walls

I am waiting for another crawly bug climb across my window sill again
I am thinking whether you would still be a political prisoner in heaven

There are flowers
At least a very huge garden

Kids are kidding
Your home should be right above the roof of my house

Very close to the church chimney
I can see the distance between birds and tress

They are as if lining into troops when snow flakes are in blossom
Far far away, the head scarves of farmers' wives are at least not grey

9.
Noting, nothing, no sceneries at all
January 8th, the poet is dead and where is sunlight

In prison Indians' long braids are cut off like weeds on ground
They are all political prisoners and spend the night in snow

After tonight it would be another new year
More freedom to talk, anything except state secrets

Behind the backs of the forgotten people
Some people are following the time, moving from here to there

The adjective of post-communism
Your hands cannot write poems over there

And here

Poet and more poets
Flying moths, spiritual ones, dash over and extinguish lights

10.

January 9th, right today

I am not at home, I go to somewhere else

A large swarm of birds are not flying in the sky

It is winter, too cold for people to take another glimpse of it

Even for another glimpse: white snow sky dotted with blackness

Your name will be carved on the poets' monument

I will read alone in silence the sentences on the stone

Or the statutes sitting still on branches

However, keep away from me, the dirty motherland

You never know no one can be alive once being buried with you

You never know all people alive want to die

11.

January 10th, my last day

Heavy snow doesn't appear as any day before December 31st

We can talk about something, as long as it's not of state secrets

As long as it's not seeing off another poet by myself alone

In snowfield

Or in one winter

Or only one white bird keeps motionless

I will never get despaired towards anybody

I will never miss sunlight in despair

2011-1-9

CHINA HILL

(Translated by Biao CHEN)

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JING WA, poet, was born in the 1970s in Guangdong. She leads a life of traveling, photographing and writing. Her major works include “Mum Doesn’t Need Me Any More”, and “Selected Short Poems by Jingwa”.

A Brief of Independent Chinese PEN Centre

Independent Chinese PEN Center (ICPC) is a nongovernmental, nonprofit and nonpartisan organization beyond borders based on free association of those who write, edit, translate, research and publish literature work in Chinese and dedicated to freedom of expression for the workers in Chinese language and literature, including writers, journalists, translators, scholars and publishers over the world. ICPC is a member organization of International PEN, the global association of writers dedicated to freedom of expression and the defence of writers suffering governmental repression. Through the worldwide PEN network and its own membership base in China and abroad, ICPC is able to mobilize international attention to the plight of writers and editors within China attempting to write and publish with a spirit of independence and integrity, regardless of their political views, ideological standpoint or religious beliefs.

ICPC was founded in 2001 by a group of Chinese writers in exile and in China, including its founding President LIU Binyan, a prominent author, journalist and activist who passed away in exile in USA on Dec. 5 2005, Vice-president and author ZHENG Yi, Executive Director and poet BEI Ling and Freedom to Write Committee Coordinator and poet MENG Lang, all of whom have been in exile in USA. In November of same year, ICPC was approved as a chapter of the International PEN at its annual congress in London. Since then, ICPC has made vigorous efforts to promote and defend the freedom of writing and publication and the free flow of information in China, and been deeply concerned about the state of civil society and open discourse there.

In September and October, 2009, ICPC held its Fourth Internet Congress of the Membership Assembly to have elected 5 Board members and 2 alternates to fill it vacancies, including the President Tienchi MARTIN-LIAO (Germany) and 2 Vice-presidents Patrick POON (Hong Kong) and QI Jiazhen (Australia). The past president Dr. LIU Xiaobo, who has been imprisoned since December 8, 2008, was elected Honorary President.